



Building Narratives for a Caring Green Economy

A Feminist Green New Deal Coalition Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | SEPTEMBER 2021

Summary:

The ongoing crises of care and climate—and their intersections with racial, economic and gender injustice -were already demanding massive shifts in society and the economy. Now, in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more imperative that these crises are solved together. But planning for a future that centers well-being for people and the planet requires an understanding of the intersectionality of these crises, the ways in which policy can deliver intersectional solutions, and the narratives that help and hurt this cause. To pursue promising pathways toward intersectional progress, our report ([link](#)) **develops and polls narratives that illustrate the connections between care and climate.** Results demonstrate that there is **bipartisan support for most messages and proposals, with strong shared beliefs that care should be central to climate, workforce, and infrastructure policies.** The main goals and top findings of the report are below:

Goal #1:

To explore the connections between care and climate narratives in a way that is rooted in history, policy, and norms.

- ➔ Neoliberal principles of individualism, privatization, and deregulation that are pervasive in the United States have obstructed action on state-led and collective solutions to the care and climate crises.
- ➔ To counter harmful narratives, we need an inclusive visionary narrative around climate and care for 5 main reasons (*read more on page 5 of the full report*):
 - **Care work is climate work**, and this notion should be mainstreamed in media, literature, and policy.
 - **Equity is central to a Green New Deal**, and transitional policies will not advance racial and gender justice without including care work.¹
 - **Climate action needs to address peoples' current needs**, but it's often positioned as an investment for future change and well being, especially the needs of those already most impacted by climate pollution and the climate crisis.
 - **Narratives drive public imagination**. The stories we tell help envision the world we want to build. Identifying messages that are compelling and resonant will help forge a clearer path toward building a vision of, and movement for, a caring green future.
 - **Narrative shift is important for building a vision of a green economy that includes everyone**, acknowledging that climate change is about our ability to care for each other and the environments that we share.

¹ Any transitional policies must include an intersectional feminist analysis that recognizes the way race, class, gender, ability, and other identities shapes the way we experience the climate crisis. Though we lift up racial and gender justice here, we understand a just transition to demand holistic shifts in society and the economy, outlined further in our Principles: feminist-greennewdeal.com/principles



Goal #2:

To understand public opinions related to the intersectional narratives we aim to mainstream: a) care work is climate work, b) care work is essential, and c) care infrastructure is climate infrastructure. The results below reflect responses to a Data for Progress survey of 1,438 likely voters, deployed the week of April 19, 2021.

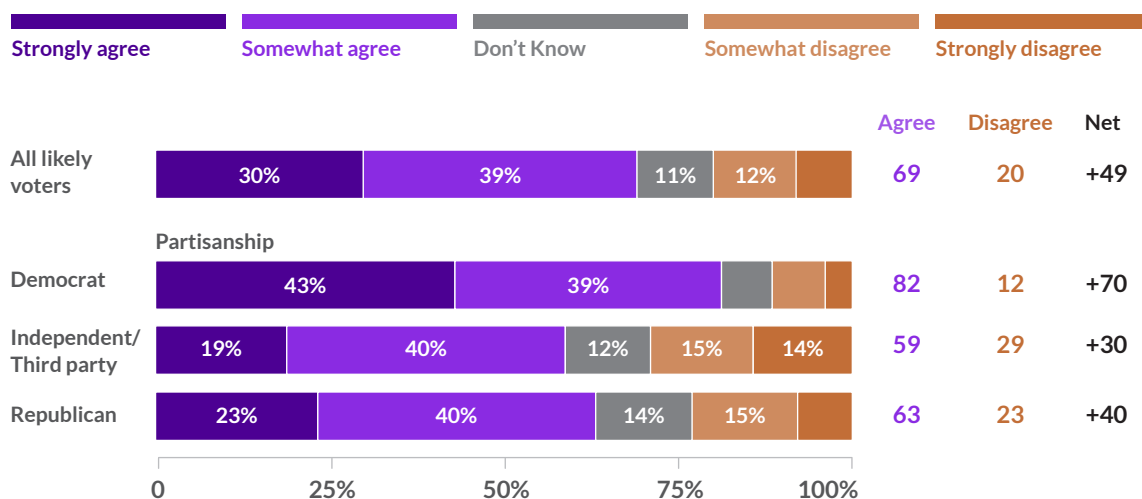
a. Care work is climate work.

“Green” jobs should refer to all jobs related to the well-being of people and the planet, and that includes care.

➔ 69% of all respondents agree that green jobs are any job related to the well-being of people and the planet.

Voters Agree Green Jobs Are Any Job Related to the Well-Being of People and the Planet

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: Green jobs are any job related to the well-being of people and the planet.



April 21-23, 2021 survey of 1,410 likely voters. Data for Progress.



- ➔ Yet when provided images of “green” jobs, there was little consensus as to what, exactly, constitutes work for people and the planet.

Renewable energy and conservation work is typically considered “green jobs”

Care jobs are “green jobs” but are less often considered as such



67%
of respondents
marked
solar installer
as a green job



30%
of respondents
marked
school teacher
as a green job



50%
of respondents
marked
wind technician
as a green job



14%
of respondents
marked
elder care
as a green job



33%
of respondents
marked
forestry
as a green job



14%
of respondents
marked
child care
as a green job

➔ Messages arguing that care work is climate work are popular.

Note: Respondents who are parents and caregivers are more likely to agree with every message that demonstrates how care work is climate work, than all respondents.

Message Tested:

Result:

“Domestic workers ensure a clean and healthy home environment, child and elder care workers ensure the health, safety, and well-being of those in need, and teachers are responsible for paving the way for a prosperous future. These roles and responsibilities are in line with the needs and goals of climate action—of ensuring safe and healthy environments for everyone—and therefore domestic work, care work, and teaching are climate jobs.”

60%

think this message is very or somewhat persuasive

75% of Democrats
47% of Republicans

“Care work is essential for families, the economy, and responding to needs of people during pandemics, but also when there are climate disasters like heat waves, fires, and floods. Therefore, care work is climate work.”

59%

think this message is very or somewhat persuasive

75% of Democrats
50% of Republicans

“Care work is low-carbon work that doesn’t add to climate pollution and is necessary for health and well-being. Therefore, care work is a critical part of a green economy.”

55%

think this message is very or somewhat persuasive

67% of Democrats
43% of Republicans

“The green economy should include all work that does not contribute to climate change, including those serving health and well-being to families and communities, and that includes care work.”

52%

think this message is very or somewhat persuasive

69% of Democrats
40% of Republicans

b. Care workers are essential and deserve better.

Care is critical green work and those who provide care deserve better support, pay and conditions.

Message Tested:

Result:

“Care jobs, like child and elder care, are often unpaid or low-paying. However, they are essential jobs that provide meaningful and rewarding work. If care jobs paid wages that were more in line with other occupations and industries, they would be more attractive to a wider range of workers, including men.”

71%

think this message is very or somewhat persuasive

84% of Democrats
64% of Republicans

“Low-carbon care work is critical for a healthy economy and environment, and care workers deserve better pay and working conditions.”

65%

agree with this message

80% of Democrats
55% of Republicans

“Would you support or oppose a new federal policy to ensure that care workers, including new clean economy jobs created through the American Jobs Plan, can take paid leave so they can care for themselves and their families in times of need?”

65%

support this policy

80% of Democrats
61% of Republicans

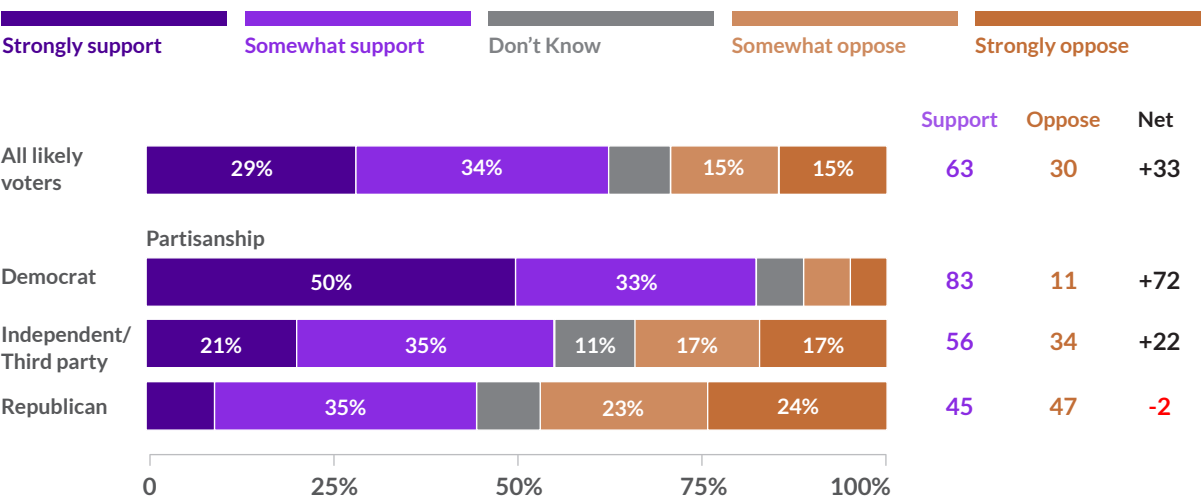


c. Care infrastructure is climate infrastructure.

It’s fundamental to an [equitable green economy](#)² and is essential, low-carbon human and physical infrastructure that’s critical for community resilience. More government investments should reflect the role of care as vital infrastructure, and care work as essential work.

Voters Support Job-Creating Investments in Caregiving Infrastructure

President Biden has proposed a \$700 billion investment over the next 10 years to build a caregiving infrastructure by investing in child care and social services like Medicaid. Some independent academic researchers suggest that this investment could create over 20 million good-paying jobs over the next decade in jobs both for caregivers and others in their communities. Do you support or oppose this investment?”



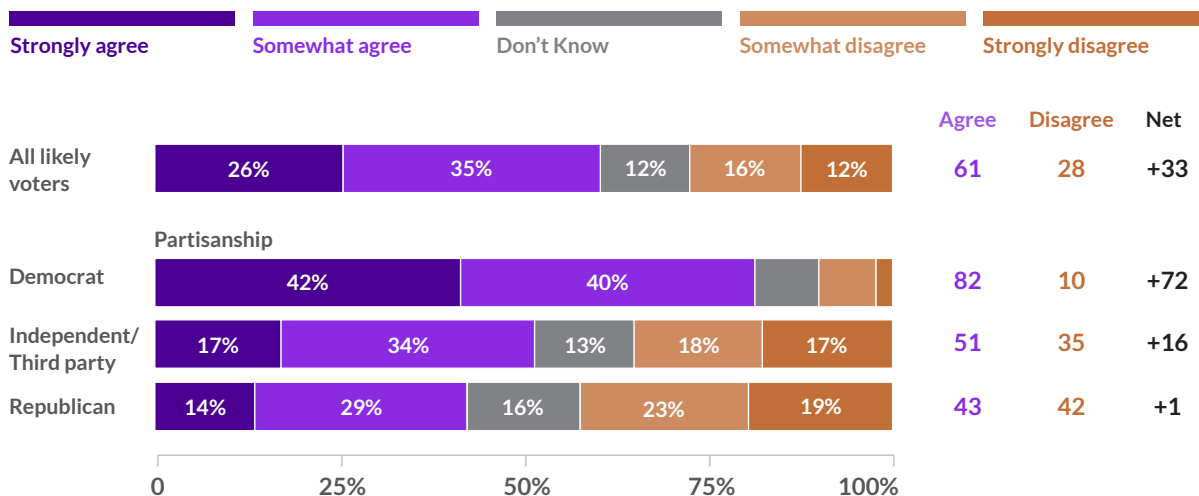
April 21-23, 2021 survey of 1,410 likely voters. Data for Progress.

A robust care infrastructure could be strengthened nationwide through a **Care and Climate Corps** that recruits, trains, and employs people for living wages, with benefits. To improve the capacity of our green social infrastructure by including care workers in a corps program, more workers could be trained in climate-responsive care, including caring for clients, community and family members experiencing ills related to extreme heat, drought, freezing temperatures, and evacuation.

² Casey Berkovitz, Amanda Novello and Olivia Chan, “[Care Infrastructure Is Key to an Equitable, Green Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis](#),” Ms Magazine, April 2021.

Voters Support Expanding the Climate Corps Proposal to Include Both Care and Environmental Jobs

The recently released American Jobs Plan includes a proposal for a climate corps that will put young Americans to work on projects to conserve our public lands and waters, improve community resilience to climate change, and advance environmental justice. Some lawmakers say that since care work is low-carbon work that's essential for a green economy, jobs offered in this program should include care. Do you agree or disagree that the American Jobs Plan should expand this proposal to include both care and environmental jobs?"



April 21-23, 2021 survey of 1,410 likely voters. Data for Progress.

Conclusion

Respondents want the government to play a bigger role in ensuring everyone is cared for and that care workers are supported, especially in the context of a changing climate. Our survey shows that, although there is a bias against care being perceived as “green jobs”, that bias erodes when exposed to specific narratives demonstrating that care is climate work. Once prompted, there is a strong shared belief that care should be central to climate, workforce, and infrastructure policies.

Acknowledgements:

[The Feminist Green New Deal Coalition](#) advocates for feminist principles to guide our response to the climate crisis. The coalition would like to thank the author of this report, Amanda Novello, an independent economic policy researcher and consultant, as well as Data for Progress for their collaboration and administering of the polling elements of this report. We also have deep gratitude to the allies in the feminist, climate and care movements who gave space and time to consult on and review this report, as well as to the Wallace Global Fund and Sierra Club for resourcing this work.